

## Chapter 20

### Health Care

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### Chapter Outline

- The Emergence of Modern Health Care
- Theoretical Perspectives on Health Care
- Health, Diversity and Social Inequality
- Social Patterns of Health and Disease
- The Health Care System in America

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### The Emergence of Modern Health Care

- Mid-1800s - Discovery of **germ theory**, the idea that many illnesses were caused by microscopic organisms, or germs.
- Late 1800s - Germ theory established itself as a foundation of medicine.
- 1847 - The founding of the American Medical Association (AMA),
- Late 1800s - The image of medicine as an upper-class profession took hold.

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## Specialization in Medicine

- With the end of World War II 1945, there was tremendous growth in the medical establishment and increased specialization.
- Today, specialists (80% of physicians) greatly outnumber general practitioners (20%).

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## The Role of Government in Medicine

- The U.S. government has sought to have some form of guaranteed health service, at least for certain categories of people, such as veterans, the poor, and the elderly.
- The Medicare program, begun in 1965 under the administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson, provides medical insurance covering hospital costs for individuals age 65 or older.
- Medicaid provides health insurance for people who are poor, on welfare, or disabled.

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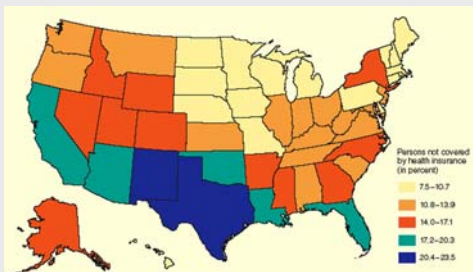
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## People Not Covered by Health Insurance




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## Perspectives on the Sociology of Health

Central Point	
<b>Functionalism</b>	Health care system has positive and negative functions
<b>Conflict Theory</b>	Health care reflects the inequalities in society
<b>Symbolic Interaction</b>	Illness is partly socially constructed

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## Perspectives on the Sociology of Health

Fundamental Problem Uncovered	
<b>Functionalism</b>	Health care system produces some negative functions
<b>Conflict Theory</b>	Bureaucratization privatization lead to excess cost
<b>Symbolic Interaction</b>	Patients are patronized and infantilized

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## Perspectives on the Sociology of Health

Policy Implications	
<b>Functionalism</b>	Decrease negative functions for minorities, the poor, and women
<b>Conflict Theory</b>	Improve access to health care
<b>Symbolic Interaction</b>	Medical personnel should periodically take the role of the patient.

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## Problem Areas in the U.S. Health Care System

- Unequal distribution of health care by race—ethnicity, social class, or gender.
  - Health care is more available to White or middle-class individuals than to minorities and the poor.
- Unequal distribution of health care by region.
  - Each year, many people in the U.S. die because they live too far away from a doctor, hospital, or emergency room.
- Inadequate health education of inner-city and rural parents.

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## Race and Health Care

- Being in a racial or ethnic minority in the United States influences physical and mental health.
  - White men can now expect to live to 75 years of age (on average).
  - African American men have a life expectancy of only 68.6 years.
  - White women can expect to live 80.2 years.
  - African American women can expect to live more 75.5 years.

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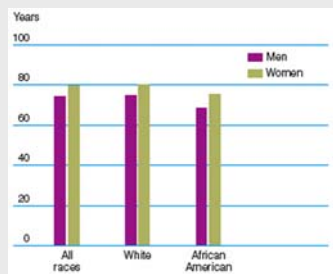
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## Life Expectancy by Race, Ethnicity and Gender




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## Social Class and Health Care

- The lower the social status of the person or family, the less access they have to adequate health care.
- Nearly 41 million Americans—14.5% of the population—have no health insurance.

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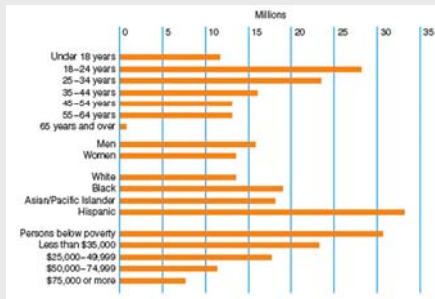
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## Persons Without Health Insurance



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## Gender and Health Care

- Older women are more likely to suffer from stress, overweight, hypertension, and chronic illness than older men.
- There is a tendency for the male-dominated profession to regard the problems of women as nonmainstream and "special".

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## Global Dimensions of Health

- The U.S. is a healthy nation relative to many other nations around the world.
- Life expectancy in the African countries of Niger, Chad, Ethiopia, and Somalia is barely 45 years of age.
- There are fewer than five doctors per 100,000 people in African countries such as Niger, Chad, and Ethiopia, Guyana in South America, and Guatemala in Latin America.

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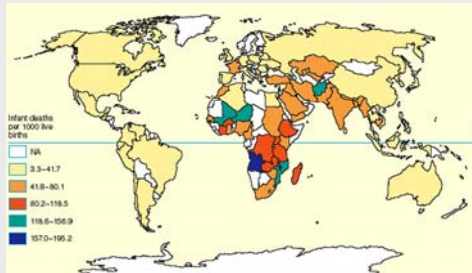
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## World Infant Mortality



## Polling Question

- How physically active are you compared to your contemporaries?
  - A.) More active
  - B.) About average
  - C.) Less active

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## Eating Disorders

- From the late 1950s through the present a positive value has been placed on being thin.
- *Anorexia nervosa* is an eating disorder characterized by compulsive dieting.
- *Bulimia* is an eating disorder characterized by alternating between binge eating and purging to avoid gaining weight.
- A majority of people suffering from the disease are young, White women from well-to-do families, most often two-parent families.

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## Smoking and Tobacco

- The Centers for Disease Control estimate that about 450,000 people die each year as a direct result of smoking— representing 20% of all deaths.
- Nonsmokers exposed to secondhand cigarette smoke have a higher risk of smoking-related disease, including death, than nonsmokers who are not exposed.
- A study of more than 32,000 healthy women who never smoked found that regular exposure to other people's smoking doubled the risk of heart disease for the nonsmoker.

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## Polling Question

- Do you currently smoke cigarettes?
- A.) Yes
- B.) No

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## Sexually Transmitted Diseases

- The four major STDs are syphilis, gonorrhea, genital herpes, and AIDS.
- Syphilis and gonorrhea are caused by microorganisms transmitted through sexual contact involving the mucous membranes of the body.
- Genital herpes (Herpes Simplex II) affects roughly 30 million people in the United States alone.

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## AIDS

- AIDS is the category of disorders that result from a breakdown of the body's immune system.
- When AIDS first appeared in the early 1980s, it was mostly associated with gay men and was heavily stigmatized.
- The federal government (during the Reagan administration) devoted little research funds to identify its causes.
- The stigma associating AIDS with gay men and the delay in researching treatment likely cost many lives.

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## AIDS

- HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, was first identified in 1981.
- The incubation period between infection with HIV and the development of AIDS can stretch longer than ten years.
- Since the 1980s, the disease has spread rapidly, with over 830,000 cases reported in the United States from 1981 to 2002.
- Over 34 million adults and children worldwide are infected with HIV, 14.8 million of whom are women.

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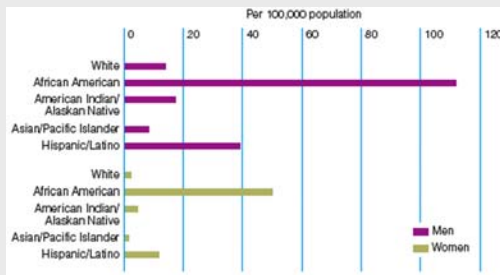
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## AIDS Cases by Race and Gender




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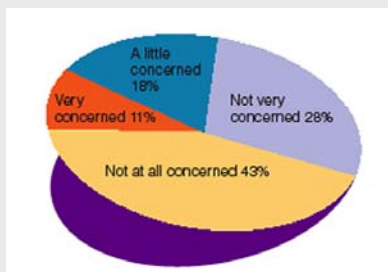
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## Teen Concerns About AIDS (13 to 17)




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## Disability

- The disability rights movement has generated significant change in how society treats people with disabilities.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act, passed by Congress in 1990 protects disabled persons from discrimination and requires employers and other institutional providers to provide "reasonable accommodation" so that disabled people can be productive citizens.

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## Mental Illness

- Mental illness is not distributed uniformly through society, revealing the social basis of this health problem.
- Poverty, because it is stress-producing, is significantly related to the likelihood of mental illness.
- Those those who experience discrimination often experience high rates of hypertension, depression, and other forms of mental disorders as a consequence.

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## Euthanasia

- The act of killing a severely ill person as an act of mercy.
- *Negative euthanasia*, (passive euthanasia), involves withholding treatment with the knowledge that it will produce the death of the patient, such as stipulated in a living will.
- *Positive or "active" euthanasia*, involves killing the severely ill person who would otherwise live, though in constant pain, coma, or other extreme conditions, as an act of mercy.

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## Euthanasia: Guidelines

- The medical profession has established two guidelines:
  1. The physician must clearly explain to the patient all the medical options available to sustain life.
    - If the patient is not capable of understanding the options, the physician will explain them to members of the family.
  2. The physician may honor the living will of the patient.

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## Health Expenditures: International View




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## The Cost of Health Care

- The greatest contributors to skyrocketing health care costs are:
  - The soaring costs of hospital care.
  - The rise in fees for the services of physicians.

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## Medical Malpractice

- Annual malpractice insurance premiums for physicians can be as high as \$150,000 for physicians in specialties such as radiology, anesthesiology, and surgery.
- This cost is passed along to patients, contributing to the rise in the overall cost of health care.

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## Health maintenance organizations (HMOs)

- Private clinical care organizations that provide medical services in exchange for a set membership fee.
- In 1986, there were approximately 26 million HMO subscribers in the United States, this number has risen to more than 55 million.
- The American Medical Association has argued that HMOs are inclined to pay too much attention to cost containment and not enough to patient welfare.

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## Quick Quiz

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1. The idea that many illnesses were caused by microscopic organisms is reflected in the:
- a. "bad blood" theory
  - b. germ theory
  - c. bilious humors theory
  - d. alchemist theory

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Answer: b

- The idea that many illnesses were caused by microscopic organism is reflected in **germ theory**.

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2. A governmental program that provides medical care in the form of health insurance covering hospital costs for all individuals who are age sixty-five or older is called:
- a. Medic-gap
  - b. Medic-fare
  - c. Medicare
  - d. Medicaid

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Answer: c

- A governmental program that provides medical care in the form of health insurance covering hospital costs for all individuals who are age sixty-five or older is called **medicare**.

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3. "The health care system has certain functions, both positive and negative." This statement reflects:
- a. symbolic interaction
  - b. evolutionary theory
  - c. functionalism
  - d. conflict theory

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Answer: c

- "The health care system has certain functions, both positive and negative." This statement reflects: **functionalism**.

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4. The study of all factors—biological, social, economic, and cultural—that are associated with disease in society is referred to as:

- a. social epidemiology
- b. etiology
- c. epidemiology
- d. medical sociology

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Answer: c

- The study of all factors—biological, social, economic, and cultural—that are associated with disease in society is referred to as **epidemiology**.

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